

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: December 7, 2017

Agenda Item: Donation of Property from Carbon County for Development as an Fishing Access Site (R5)

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Final

Background:

Carbon County offered to donate approximately 1.5 acres of property located along the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone at Edgar for development it as a fishing access site (FAS). This property is bordered by a county road, the river and an abandoned county bridge access road, which provides good access to this parcel while providing a separation from a neighbor property. This site will provide public access to a long section of the Clarks Fork River that currently has no public access. The closest fishing access to this site are located 26 miles upstream on the Clarks Fork River and 26 miles downstream on the Yellowstone River, 4 miles downstream of the confluence of the Clarks Fork and Yellowstone rivers. The only development proposed is a small parking area off the county road and a gravel boat ramp.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

The draft EA was circulated for public comment from July 13 to August 21, 2017 to interested agencies, groups and persons. The EA was also posted on the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks website. No comments were received on this EA although it does have the support of the local community. The only request from the county is that FWP name it Wildcat FAS representing the Edgar school mascot and team name.

Alternatives and Analysis:

This site would provide much needed river access for anglers, recreational floaters and waterfowl hunters, as well as for members of local communities on a long section of river that currently has no public access. Improvement of fish passage on the Clarks Fork River has been identified as a key project for fisheries mitigation dollars from the Yellowstone River oil spill. Improved fish passage that provides better access for Yellowstone River fish to the Clarks Fork should improve this fishery resulting in increased access demands on the river. Approving this donation from Carbon County could be very important in addressing future recreation demands on the Clarks Fork River. If no action was taken and the parcel was not acquired for an FAS, public access to this stretch of the river would continue to be difficult and receive limited use. By accessing the river at the bridge, people would be forced to park along the county road creating a traffic safety hazard as this road is used heavily by farm equipment and semitrucks. In addition, accessing the river at the bridge would accelerate degradation of the streambank causing erosion and further sedimentation of the river.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale:

FWP recommends the commission approve the department's request to accept the donation of this 1.5-acre parcel of land from Carbon County. The public would gain access in the middle of a long section of the Clarks Fork River that currently has no public access.

Proposed Motion:

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve FWP's request to accept Carbon County's offer of approximately 1.5-acres of land along the Clarks Fork River near Edgar for a new fishing access site.